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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, it looks like we're going to dodge a bullet this weekend! The snow that has been blasting parts of the south and mid-Atlantic states will reach the southern shores of Massachusetts but probably won't reach me in the northeast part of the state. After last year's winter, I am definitely not complaining! Let our politicians in D.C. have a good dose of what many other parts of the country experiences so they'll know what's it's like for us!

If you've been affected, or will be some time over this weekend, by this storm, I feel for you! Good luck, and stay safe and warm!

This week's comments are short this week. Keeping tabs on this pending storm has kept me on edge the past few days; I'm getting too old to have to deal with the likes of last year's winter again! Even the "news" of Sarah Palin supporting Trump can't get me to talk politics this week!

Until next time...

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Firebee Update News

By Fred Horvat

Short column this week. I didn't do much at all with the FireBee as much of my free time has been devoted to snow removal this week. For 3 days straight I had .5 to 1.0 inch of snow per hour. Thankfully it was the light kind because the temperatures were single digits Fahrenheit during the snow fall. But it was a two times a day removal process. Get up early before work to clear snow so you can get out of the driveway and then all over again when you get home from work. After 3 days it was a lot of snow though.

When I did work on the FireBee I was researching how to install

SpareMiNT on the FireBee. SpareMiNT is FreeMiNT based on the Redhat Package Manager (rpm). <http://sparemint.org/sparemint/> There are a couple of sites that discuss this but the one I settled on for now was at <https://sites.google.com/site/probehouse/mint-os-for-atari> These pages go into far more than setting up SpareMiNT. It gets into installing FreeMiNT, optimization, quicker booting, backing, up and more. Highly worth the read.

AHCC v5.3

There is a new version available on my home page (see sig)

Changes:

January 21 2016

v5.3

Compiler:

Fixed a bug that prevented proper casting of constants by explicit casting.

Fixed wrong code for casting the result of a comparison to a float (e.g. $R1 = R2 < R3$ where all R's are floats).

Fixed a regression after v4.f

Wrong code was generated for comparing the address of a array to zero (spurious, but must be OK).

Fixed an obscure error where AHCC crashed on extremely large (more than about a 1000 ch's) string denotations.

A teeny tiny little bit of clean up.

Assembler:

Fixed a regression since v5 where register masks for movem instructions involving D6 and/or D7 spelled in upper case were wrong. (typo in defs.h)

Shell:

implement asinh & acosh in tiny calculator in console.

Editor:

Find 'word' did not reverse neatly. fixed.

Unselected ^I did not select anymore. Fixed.

Library ahccstdf:

Fixed bugs in pow, sinh, asinh, cosh, acosh and tanh. (error in common function _Exp).

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Groeten; Regards.

Henk Robbers. <http://members.chello.nl/h.robbers>

Interactive disassembler: Digger; <http://digger.atari.org>

A Home Cooked C compiler: AHCC; <http://ahcc.atari.org>

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Doom Co-Creator Releases New Level After 21 Years!

Leisure Suit Larry Coming to ColecoVision!
100 Classic Atari Games Headed to Steam!

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
"

Doom Co-Creator John Romero Releases New Level
After 21 Years: Here's How To Play It

'Doom' gets another level from one of the original creators of the series John Romero. He says that it's his take of Elm8 Phobos Anomaly, noting that it's a 'boss level replacement for Elm8 ... 22 years later.'

Porting it to unlikely platforms such as the Apple Watch and Apple TV or even a virtual cabinet inside the game itself became a trend, and at some point, it seemed like bringing Doom to modern devices was the best thing to do with it aside from the modding, of course.

In other words, a new area from one of the original makers to shoot up monsters and whatnot may have come across as something unthinkable for some, but thanks to Romero, here it is.

Romero created the level using Doom WAD the modding tool that Id Software released way back in the 1990s so that he would be restricted to the same capabilities he would have had in 1993, according to him. As for the time he took to build it, he says that he spent two weeks during his spare time on it.

Calling it the Elm8B, he describes the level as his "boss level replacement for Elm8 ... 22 years later," which is the eighth and final map of Knee-Deep in the Dead, the first episode of Doom.

"After exiting the Computer Station you knew the worst was up ahead. You still hadn't reached the place where the demons were coming from. The steel door shuts behind you as you realize you're there; you're at the Phobos Anomaly. Cracks from hell are all over the place as seepage from the portal invades the entire installation. Now it's time to find the portal and stop the demons from coming through," the description of the level reads.

In an email conversation with Dean Takahashi of VentureBeat, Romero shares some of his insights of the new level.

"As for the level, E1M8 was an obvious choice for me. Out of the shareware episode of DOOM, E1M8, the boss level, was the only level I didn't make. Sandy Petersen did an amazing job with the original one with the very memorable Barons of Hell right in your face at the end, of course," he says, noting that DoomBuilder is his go-to tool to create the level.

To play it, the tool ZDoom or other similar software plus the original Doom are required. Also, the new map is playable solo, co-op or deathmatch. Interestingly, the original Doom paved the way of deathmatch mode to the first-person shooter genre, which has since become a standard for many other similar games.

Now, Romero is no longer part of the team that's developing the series. Bethesda took over things this time around, and the developer is all set to roll out a modernized take of Doom sometime this year - yep, there are currently no specifics yet, but Amazon "leaked" a possible release date just recently.

With the recent development, Doom seems even more unlikely to die out anytime soon, not to mention that the dedicated gaming community DoomWorld has been playing and modding the game for over 20 years now.

John Romero Makes His First Doom Level in 21 Years

Doom creator John Romero says it had been 21 years since he made a level for the game. However, that changed when he created his own iteration of the classic E1M8 map.

The dev used a Doom level editor to create it, limiting himself only to the "shareware assets." The original level was created by Doom I and Doom II level designer Sandy Peterson. Romero included the Dropbox download link for his version in a Facebook post.

Doom's fourth installment is said to release in Q2 of 2016, but IGN reported that the date may have been leaked by Amazon France. The company listed the game's release as June 30, though Bethesda remains firm that they haven't yet set a date, saying that "a variety of retailers have different placeholder dates."

Back in July, IGN went hands-on with Doom's multiplayer. Editor Brian Albert was "sure game developers were running out ways to creatively kill people in video games" until he experienced Doom's multiplayer at QuakeCon.

Leisure Suit Larry, er Toby, Coming to ColecoVision

It is no great secret in the realm of retrogaming that there are more than a few homage titles. Some are done with the permission of the owners of the intellectual property, such as Halo 2600, and others are more under the radar releases. Most UTR releases are quite good and damn near lawsuit perfect

renditions of the original but on a new platform. We call these Bandit Gaming releases, a carryover name from a site we operated years ago (Video Game Cowboys if anyone is wondering). Now, CollectorVision have started showing work in progress shots of their homage to Leisure Suit Larry, the Al Lowe classic adventure, called Leisure Suit Toby (for legal reasons the name is changed slightly). Interestingly, Leisure Suit Toby is coming to the ColecoVision console of all platforms.

Since this is a homage title the team at CollectorVision are working closely with the source material. Take that to read, they are recreating as much of the original adventure on the Coleco console as possible. This includes the babes that Toby will be interacting with throughout his adventure.

So far most of the screens are converted over to ColecoVision resolution and color depth and work has begun on creating the women. Character sprites are not in place yet so there are only backgrounds available at this time.

Jean-Francois Dupuis, owner of CollectorVision Games, has stated on AtariAge that he has been working on and off again with Leisure Suit Toby since 2010. Release is expected next Fall/Winter. No word if he means 2016 or 2017.

KHAN Games have done a Nintendo Entertainment System version of Leisure Suit Larry but it was a completely new game. Larry and the Long Look for a Luscious Lover was the title of KHAN Games version. CollectorVision are going for a direct port of the original title.

100 Classic Atari Games Headed to Steam

Ready to re-live your youth, Atari nerds?

The company on Thursday announced plans to release 100 of its classic games including Asteroids, Centipede, Missile Command, Tempest, Warlords, and more as a single PC title with new features and multiplayer capabilities.

Currently under development by Code Mystic (the same company behind Atari's Greatest Hits for mobile devices), the so-called Atari Vault will be available via Valve's Steam platform at some point this spring, letting fans "relive the classic gaming experience in the modern age," Atari said.

Featuring an "upgraded user interface," Atari Vault will boast online and local multiplayer options, and Steam Controller support for "significantly improved precision control" than you had back in the day. Perhaps most exciting you will, for the first time ever, be able to challenge other Atari fans from around the world, and compete for bragging rights on Steam Leaderboards.

Rest assured that the games will feature their original soundtracks from the 70s and 80s, so you can jam out just like you did in the old days. That's pretty much all we know at this point

(there's no word on pricing), but Atari plants to preview the bundle later this month at PAX South 2016 in San Antonio, Texas, so stay tuned for more.

We haven't heard too much else from Atari recently, but the company several years ago teamed up with Microsoft to bring eight of its classic games to the Web for free in HTML5. Head over to the Atari Arcade to brush up on your Asteroids, Centipede, Combat, Lunar Lander, Missile Command, Yars Revenge, Pong, and Super Breakout skills before Atari Vault drops later this year.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Trump Promises He'll Force Apple To Manufacture in the US

There's going to be a lot of change in the near future.

Perhaps you are already hoping for it.

When Donald J. Trump ascends to the presidency - as Donald J. Trump promises he will - the focus will be on making America great again.

"We want to win, win, win," the leading Republican candidate explained in a speech on Monday at Liberty University in Virginia.

This will include long, sturdy walls, lots of expulsions and an enormous tariff on goods coming in from, say, China.

But what might this mean for gadget companies? So many have their products made in that country. Apple, for example.

Trump made a solemn promise: "We're going to get Apple to build their damn computers and things in this country instead of in other countries."

Currently, Apple only manufactures its Mac Pro in the US (specifically in Austin, Texas). On its jobs creation Web site, Apple insists it's responsible for creating and supporting 1.9 million US jobs, as of the end of 2015. It also claims that "thirty-one of the 50 states provide parts, materials, or equipment to make Apple products."

The optics, however, aren't optimum. It may well be that the cardstock for Apple's beautiful letterpress cards comes from Wisconsin, but the image of hundreds of thousands of Chinese workers toiling in difficult conditions in China to make iPhones is more powerful.

It's not entirely clear how Trump would strong-arm Tim Cook. Would he turn up in Cupertino, storm into Cook's office and talk to him about New York values? Would he summon him to Washington or merely send him an iMessage?

Cook has suggested that China's vocational schools actually produce more of the kinds of skilled workers needed for high-tech products. "I mean, you can take every tool and die maker in the United States and probably put them in a room that we're currently sitting in," Cook said in an interview with "60 Minutes" last month. (CNET and "60 Minutes" share a common parent, CBS.) "In China, you would have to have multiple football fields."

Or would Trump hold a special edition of "The Celebrity Apprentice" to make all major US CEOs compete for their jobs? (In order to survive week by week, they'd have to find new ways to market the Trump brand, as well agree to make every product in the US.)

Trump did say that he'd strong-arm Ford CEO Mark Fields by telling him he'd charge a 35 percent tax if Ford continued to manufacture in countries such as Mexico. Presumably, Apple would also be subject to such a draconian sanction.

Oddly, Trump also said he's a "free-trader." However, he doesn't seem to believe American companies should be free to manufacture wherever they choose. "Free trade is good. But we have to do it [force them back to the US]. Or we won't have a country left," he said, undramatically.

His comments about Apple came within a minute of his roughly 50-minute speech ending. But Trump isn't alone in believing that Apple would gain from manufacturing solely in the US.

Immediately after the words about Apple, Trump said he wasn't merely going to make America great again, but "greater than ever before."

Some might believe that, should he win the election, Trump will be the Beltway Berlusconi, though Mr. B didn't quite make Italy great again. Others might muse that he says many truthful things about the way government operates (or doesn't) today.

What's interesting is that Trump now appears to be, well, thinking different. In 2012, he was promoting his book, "Crippled America." Then, he said that he lamented Apple's presence in China.

Trump said: "We have to bring Apple - and other companies like Apple - back to the United States. We have to do it. And that's one of my real dreams for the country, to get ... them back. We have a great capacity in this country."

It seems that this particular dream may involve persuasion that is less silver-tongued and more brass-knuckled.

I wonder if it will work.

Twitter Hit by Sporadic Outages in Many Parts of Globe

Twitter said on Tuesday its social network was suffering ongoing outages on computers and phones and it was working to resolve issues which have been widely reported across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and North America.

Both Twitter's web and mobile services began suffering outages concentrated in northern Europe around 0820 GMT, with smartphone users receiving the warning: "Tweets aren't loading right now."

Users from Scandinavia to Saudi Arabia to South Africa reported outages. India and Russia also suffered performance issues, according to a Twitter technical site.

Intermittent breakdowns later spread to the United States and Canada in the early part of their working day.

Sporadic disruptions continued at 1420 GMT, six hours after they first began to spread.

"Some users are currently experiencing problems accessing Twitter," a statement on the company's Twitter status website has read for several hours (<http://status.twitter.com/>).

"We are aware of the issue and are working towards a resolution." A company spokeswoman had no further comment.

Services had been restored for some affected users, only to fail again later. Some Twitter features continued to operate normally for some users, while others suffered disruptions, according to Twitter's developer website.

The on-again, off-again nature of the outages meant that the hashtag #twitterdown was trending as a topic while Twitter was down for many other users.

US Releases Iranian Hacker as Part of Prisoner Exchange Program

The United States has freed 4 Iranian nationals (including one Hacker) and reduced the sentences of 3 others in exchange for the release of 5 Americans formerly held by Iran as part of a prisoner swap or Prisoner Exchange Program.

The Iranian citizens released from the United States custody through a side deal to the Iran nuclear agreement.

Iran released five Americans, including:

- Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian
- Former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati
- Student Matthew Trevithick
- Christian pastor Saeed Abedini
- Pastor Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari

The United States pardoned seven Iranian nationals, including:

Nader Modanlou
Bahram Mechanic
Khosrow Afqahi
Arash Ghahreman
Touraj Faridi
Nima Golestaneh (Hacker)
Ali Sabounchi

"These individuals weren't charged with terrorism or any violent offenses. They are civilians, and their release is a one-time gesture to Iran given the unique opportunity offered by this moment and the larger circumstances at play," President Barack Obama said Sunday.

"And it reflects our willingness to engage with Iran to advance our mutual interests, even as we ensure the national security of the United States."

However, among the released Iranian nationals was the hacker who attempted to steal military secrets from a U.S. company.

Nima Golestaneh, a 30-year-old Iranian man, was extradited to the United States from Turkey last year after being suspected of a hacking attack against American defense contractor Arrow Tech Associates.

In October 2012, Golestaneh successfully broke into the servers of the Vermont-based aerodynamics company, which builds ballistics prediction and testing software, and then plundered its databases in an attempt to steal software worth millions of dollars.

Federal investigators tracked Golestaneh down to Turkey and then extradited to the U.S. last year to face trial on charges of wire fraud, unauthorized access to computers and money laundering.

However, Golestaneh was pardoned by the United States and sent back to the Islamic Republic before being sentenced.

It is believed that Golestaneh was part of Iranian increasingly active hacking team that, according to American officials, is targeting both United States infrastructure and defense companies, as well as the email systems of the Las Vegas Sands casino.

The prisoner swap comes just a few days after the Iran captured and released 10 United States sailors in the Persian Gulf.

DARPA Looks To Implant Computer To Interface Directly with Human Brain

A new DARPA program aims to develop an implantable neural interface able to provide unprecedented signal resolution and data-transfer bandwidth between the human brain and the digital world. The

interface would serve as a translator, converting between the electrochemical language used by neurons in the brain and the ones and zeros that constitute the language of information technology. The goal is to achieve this communications link in a biocompatible device no larger than one cubic centimeter in size, roughly the volume of two nickels stacked back to back.

The program, Neural Engineering System Design (NESD), stands to dramatically enhance research capabilities in neurotechnology and provide a foundation for new therapies.

Today's best brain-computer interface systems are like two supercomputers trying to talk to each other using an old 300-baud modem, said Phillip Alvela, the NESD program manager, in a statement. Imagine what will become possible when we upgrade our tools to really open the channel between the human brain and modern electronics.

Among the program's potential applications are devices that could compensate for deficits in sight or hearing by feeding digital auditory or visual information into the brain at a resolution and experiential quality far higher than is possible with current technology.

Neural interfaces currently approved for human use squeeze a tremendous amount of information through just 100 channels, with each channel aggregating signals from tens of thousands of neurons at a time. The result is noisy and imprecise. In contrast, the NESD program aims to develop systems that can communicate clearly and individually with any of up to one million neurons in a given region of the brain.

Achieving the program's ambitious goals and ensuring that the envisioned devices will have the potential to be practical outside of a research setting will require integrated breakthroughs across numerous disciplines including neuroscience, synthetic biology, low-power electronics, photonics, medical device packaging and manufacturing, systems engineering, and clinical testing. In addition to the program's hardware challenges, NESD researchers will be required to develop advanced mathematical and neuro-computation techniques to first transcode high-definition sensory information between electronic and cortical neuron representations and then compress and represent those data with minimal loss of fidelity and functionality.

To accelerate that integrative process, the NESD program aims to recruit a diverse roster of leading industry stakeholders willing to offer state-of-the-art prototyping and manufacturing services and intellectual property to NESD researchers on a pre-competitive basis. In later phases of the program, these partners could help transition the resulting technologies into research and commercial application spaces.

Security Expert Warns LastPass Could Be Vulnerable To Phishing

If you use any kind of password manager, you likely trust that app quite intimately. Using it, you likely feel a bit safer from

phishing attacks than users who enter their passwords on a per-site basis. If you stumble across a fake Facebook login page, LastPass, for example, won't do its thing. The popular password manager app, however, is not invincible. No password manager is. As demonstrated by security expert Sean Cassidy at the recent ShmooCon security meetup, users of password managers should be mindful as well. Perhaps the caveat would apply even more to password manager users; If somebody loses one password to a phishing attack, their trouble is with that particular service. If somebody is duped into entering their details for a fake LastPass pop up window, as shown in the main image, every password they have falls into the wrong hands. Essentially, their digital life is now somebody else's to control until they can take serious steps to wrestle control back.

Using what he called LostPass, Cassidy presented a fake LastPass popup window that looked remarkably similar to the real thing. Because LastPass uses a master password that a user must enter each time they access a site that requires LastPass to enter their password for them, getting that one password could expose a user's entire digital fingerprint, so to speak. Using a similar setup, a phishing attack could dupe a user into entering their details and feed them to an outside source. Next thing they know, their bank account could be dry and their Facebook account could be posting scams from all over the web.

LastPass representatives were quick to point out, of course, that this is not a vulnerability with LastPass in particular. Phishing attacks in similar and various forms have been around for a very long time. Cassidy was emphasizing, instead, how easy it would be for a user's entire password book to fall into the wrong hands. It is always best practice to exercise caution on the web, but password manager users in particular should be careful. If you use a password manager, memorize the login screen very carefully and keep a picture for reference if needed. If any details are off, including the URL if applicable, you should report the page in question to the password manager app's developers at once.

123456 Tops Yearly List of Most Common Passwords (Again)

You'd like to think that we humans are getting progressively better at using these computer things as the years pass. But a quick scan through 2015's list of most commonly used passwords will smash and set fire to that bit of optimistic thinking.

For a fifth straight year, the secure phrases 123456 and password were the most-used and second-most-used passwords by Interneters in North America and Western Europe, according to SplashData's annual Worst Passwords ranking.

The company, which develops password management software, uses aggregations of leaked passwords as sample sizes to determine the most popular security phrases in circulation. Though 123456 and password have been the most abundant among the millions of leaked passwords analyzed yearly by SplashData since 2011, security expert and author Mike Burkett (who's collaborated with the company on its annual lists) has had the passphrases marked

as No. 1 and 2 on his Worst Passwords of All Time list since 2005.

Other worst passwords on SplashData's latest list were qwerty, football, dragon, and 111111.

Read the entire 2015 ranking below:

123456
password
12345678
qwerty
12345
123456789
football
1234
1234567
baseball
welcome
1234567890
abc123
111111
1qaz2wsx
dragon
master
monkey
letmein
login
princess
qwertyuiop
solo
password
starwars

Scary, but at least we're beginning to see some horribly insecure Star Wars passwords in the mix! (Next best thing to horribly insecure Spaceballs passwords.)

Seriously, though: If your password is on the list above, do yourself a favor and change it now. And if you can't come up with a secure password on your own something more complex than monkey this 11-year-old girl will sell you one for two dollars.

Creating Strong Passwords, and Using Apps To Help Remember

It became official again this week: We are awful at passwords.

Year after year, studies show that many people still rely on passwords that are so weak that even a 5-year-old could crack them.

According to a study released this week by SplashData, a developer of password-management software, consumers continue making the riskiest choices with passwords by consistently using overly simple ones: 123456 and starwars, for instance.

I am no better than the rest of you. The password-management app Dashlane recently ran a security audit of all my passwords and what it found was ugly. It revealed that out of my 70 passwords, I had reused the same one 46 times. Twenty-five of the passwords were flagged as being particularly weak, or easy for a hacker to crack.

In my shame and embarrassment, I put together a guide of best practices for passwords and tested some tools that would help manage them.

Here's what it boils down to: To have the safest passwords protecting your digital life, each password should be unique and complex. But since memorizing 70 unique and complex passwords is nearly impossible, we also need password-manager programs to keep track of them all.

Password managers are a type of app that locks passwords in a vault and allows access to them with one master password. I tested three popular password management services: LastPass, Dashlane and 1Password for several days. All were similar, with 1Password standing out as the most cleanly designed (and least annoying) password-management tool.

I began by cleaning up my password hygiene, spending 2 % hours logging in to all 70 of my Internet accounts and changing each password, one at a time. Following the advice of security experts, I created long, complex passwords consisting of nonsensical phrases, lines from movies or one-sentence summaries of strange life events, and added numbers and special characters. (Samples: My favorite number is Green4782# or The cat ate the CoTTon candy 224%.)

Then I turned to the password managers, which store your passwords and make them accessible with a master password. Naturally, your master password should be rock solid. So for each of the three apps, I created a complex master password and jotted those down on a piece of paper. After a few days I memorized those passwords and threw away the paper.

I recommend 1Password for several reasons. The app consistently and automatically detected whenever I logged in to websites or created new passwords to ask if I wanted to add a password to the vault.

When logging in to a site, I clicked on the 1Password icon in a browser or opened the app on a phone, entered my master password and selected the service I wanted to log in to in order to plug in the password. (1Password can be set up to require the master password after a certain amount of time, say five minutes, if you don't want to keep entering it; on iPhones it can be configured to unlock the vault with your fingerprint instead of the master password.)

Of the password managers I tested, Dashlane was the most frustrating because it nagged me with too many questions. After I used Dashlane to log in to TicketWeb to order movie tickets, the app asked if I wanted to save a copy of the receipt inside its vault. In the process of doing that, it froze the browser and I lost access to the Web tickets for a moment.

Also, whenever I created a new password, Dashlane sent notifications asking if I wanted the app to automatically generate passwords for me which was not my preference.

Dashlane said the app was proactive about notifications partly because it was designed for users who may not be technically savvy.

The third app, LastPass, was less annoying than Dashlane, but in multiple instances it did not detect when I was logging in to a website to add the password into its vault. That required me to manually create a new password entry to add to the vault.

Each of the apps offers the ability to share password vaults across multiple devices smartphones, tablets and computers.

Wireless synchronization for passwords is a necessity: You don't want to be locked out of a service on your smartphone because you left your laptop containing all your passwords at work, for instance.

What distinguishes the password-management apps is how they share your passwords among different devices, and how much they charge.

Dashlane is initially free and hosts its own cloud server to share passwords across your devices, but it costs \$40 a year to use the cloud service.

LastPass is also free upfront; it offers the ability to share passwords across devices for \$12 a year.

The app 1Password came out on top because it offered the most value for the money. For a one-time payment of \$50, you get a license to use 1Password on a computer. You can use the core features of 1Password on iPhones or Android devices free if you want to unlock extra features, like the ability to store serial numbers for software licenses, it costs \$10.

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